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FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

LS 6617

BILL NUMBER: HB 1387

NOTE PREPARED: Mar 12, 2013

BILL AMENDED: Mar 12, 2013

SUBJECT: Local Veterans' Service Officers.

FIRST AUTHOR: Rep. Speedy

FIRST SPONSOR: Sen. Wyss

BILL STATUS: CR Adopted - 2nd House

FUNDS AFFECTED: X GENERAL
X DEDICATED
FEDERAL

IMPACT: State & Local

Summary of Legislation: (Amended) This bill has the following provisions:

(1) Creates the Indiana Funeral Honors Ribbon to be awarded to members and retired members of the Indiana Air National Guard and the Indiana Army National Guard and members of the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars who:

(A) are trained and certified to provide; and

(B) provide honorable and distinguished service in; the performance of military funerals and similar activities within Indiana.

(2) Provides that county and city service officers must be certified by the Indiana Department of Veterans' Affairs (IDVA).

(3) Requires the Veterans' Affairs Commission to:

(A) establish standards for certification of county and city service officers; and

(B) establish and administer a written examination for renewal of the certification of county and city service officers.

(4) Requires a county or city service officer to obtain certification from the IDVA within 30 days after becoming employed as a service officer.

(5) Requires a new county or city service officer, within one year after becoming employed as a service officer, to attend a course and become accredited to represent veterans.

(6) Requires a county or city service officer employed prior to July 1, 2013, to attend a course and become accredited to represent veterans by July 1, 2015.

(7) Requires the Veterans' Affairs Commission to administer a grant program to reimburse service officers for training expenses and to reimburse counties and cities employing services officers for computer equipment and

software.

(8) Transfers \$180,000 from the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund to the Military Family Relief Fund and appropriates this \$180,000 for the grant program.

(9) Provides that funding the grants for veteran service officers is a purpose of the Military Family Relief Fund.

Effective Date: (Amended) Upon passage; July 1, 2013.

Explanation of State Expenditures: *Summary:* This bill annually appropriates \$180,000 from the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund to the Military Family Relief Fund for the purposes of providing grants to veteran service officers and local governments to provide financial assistance for veteran service officer accreditation.

Additional Information:

Accreditation: Under the bill, veteran service officers are to become accredited by a national organization and annually renew accreditation as a condition of representing veterans. The bill allows the IDVA to provide grants to veteran service officers for training and local governments for computer and software purchases to meet these requirements. The maximum grant amount for veteran service officers is \$500 and is \$1,200 for local governments.

In order to receive a grant, veteran service officers and local governments must petition the Veterans' Affairs Commission. As a result, the workload of the Commission could increase, but should be within the routine administrative function of the Commission.

Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund: As of February 2013, the Veterans' Affairs Trust Fund maintained approximately \$7 M in total assets.

Certification: The IDVA reports they currently certify county and city veteran service officers with a certification test as required under 915 IAC 1-1-2. Additionally, by the decision of the former IDVA Director, this certification test is annually administered to all CVSOs as a condition of employment as a CVSO. Consequently, requiring the IDVA to provide a certification process for county and city veteran service officers is expected to have no new impact on the IDVA.

(Revised) *Indiana Funeral Honors Ribbon:* The bill also creates the Indiana Funeral Honors Ribbon, which is to be awarded to members of the Indiana National Guard. Funding for this award is expected to be provided from federal funds provided from the Federal Military Funeral Honors program. Providing this award is expected to have no fiscal impact on the state.

Explanation of State Revenues:

Explanation of Local Expenditures: A current county and city veteran service officer who does not receive accreditation and certification from the IDVA could be ineligible to be employed as a service officer.

County and city veteran service officer salaries are paid from local funds. To the extent a county or city veteran service officer does not obtain certification and accreditation, county or city expenditures could decrease. Decreases in county and city expenditures will depend on the duration a veteran service officer is unable to attain certification and accreditation or until a replacement accredited and certified veteran service officer can

be employed. Actual decreases are unknown.

Explanation of Local Revenues:

State Agencies Affected: IDVA, Indiana National Guard.

Local Agencies Affected: Cities and counties.

Information Sources: Tom Applegate, former Director of IDVA; Sergeant Major Brown, current Director of IDVA; Staff Sgt. Jason Cash, Indiana National Guard.

Fiscal Analyst: Bill Brumbach, 232-9559.